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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
14 December 1955

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: Finnish Presidential Election of 16-17 January 1956.

1. Offices to be filled: Three hundred presidential electors representing the country's six political parties. The electors in turn will elect the president from among a list of six candidates on 15 February. The president-elect takes office on 1 March and serves for six years.

2. Parties or factions participating:

- a. Social Democrats - Largest party; moderate, Socialist, pro-Western; probably the country's most effective anti-Communist group.
- b. Agrarians - Second largest party; narrow appeal, representing rural interests; supporters largely conservative and pro-Western.
- c. Three so-called "bourgeois" parties - National Coalition Party, Swedish People's Party, and Finnish National Party which control one fourth of the seats in parliament and in general represent commercial and industrial interests, white-collar workers and the larger farmers; strongly pro-Western.
- d. SKDL (Finnish People's Democratic League) - Communist popular front composed of Communist and splinter left-wing Socialists; completely dominated by Communists.

3. Outstanding personalities: In addition to Paasikivi, each of the six parties has nominated a candidate for the presidency:

- a. President Paasikivi--Although not a party nominee, he remains the number one "dark horse" in the election. He has not stated whether he will seek re-election, but he reportedly is willing to serve again if a majority of the parties so wish. Under Finnish law, presidential candidates need not be

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nominated prior to the election of the electoral college and need not be affiliated with any particular party.

- b. K. A. Fagerholm--Social Democrat nominee; a leading contender for the presidency. He is acceptable to all groups within the party as well as having considerable support in the "bourgeois" parties. Strong ties with Social Democratic leaders throughout Scandinavia.
- c. Prime Minister Urho Kekkonen--Agrarian nominee; a leading candidate for the presidency. He is a controversial figure in Finnish politics and distrusted by many Finns who regard him as being "too acceptable" to the Soviet Union.
- d. Eino Kilpi--SKDL (Communist) nominee. Communist support, however, is likely to go to Kekkonen or Paasikivi in the early balloting.
- e. Sakari Tuomioja--National Coalition Party (conservative) candidate. This party has announced it will support Fagerholm if its own chances appear slight.
- f. Ralf Törngren--Swedish People's Party nominee. This party has also announced its intention to support Fagerholm if its own chances are slight.
- g. Eero Rydman--Finnish National Party (liberal) nominee. This party may switch its support to either Fagerholm or Paasikivi.

4. Present party strengths:

<u>Parliament seats</u>		<u>% of vote in '54 parliamentary elections</u>	<u>% of vote in '50 presidential elections</u>	<u>Electors elected in '50 presidential elections</u>
Social				
Democrats	54	26.2	21.7	64
Agrarians	53	24.1	19.5	62
SKDL	43	21.6	21.3	67
National				
Coalition	24	12.8	22.4	68
Swedish				
Peoples'	13	7.0	8.7	24
Finnish				
National	13	7.9	5.3	15
	200			300

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5. Principal issues: There are no vital issues in this election, but since under the Finnish constitution the president plays an important role in the formulation of foreign policy, each party will seek to convince the electorate that its candidate can best be relied on to protect the country's interests in its delicate position between East and West.
6. Principal factors influencing the outcome: Lines between the Finnish political parties traditionally are tightly drawn and no significant defections are likely. In the presidential elections, however, the voter is more inclined to vote for the individual rather than for the party. On foreign policy, all parties agree that Finland must maintain good relations with the Soviet Union.
7. Informed opinion on outcome: Of the two leading candidates, Prime Minister Kekkonen and Fagerholm, the latter appears to be in a more favored position at the moment. However, the outcome depends in large part on whether President Paasikivi will agree to serve another term, full or shortened. No one party is likely to gain a majority of electoral votes on the first ballot; and if a deadlock developed between Kekkonen and Fagerholm, there probably would be an attempt to break it by falling back on a compromise candidate. Paasikivi is the most likely alternate candidate, but if he should decline because of his age, one of the small "bourgeois" party candidates might be favored.

If the Agrarian and SKDL (Communist) electors decide that Kekkonen's election is remote, they will probably seek to prevent Fagerholm's election by nominating Paasikivi who, if he consented to run, would receive the support of the big majority of the electors.


8. The election of Paasikivi, Fagerholm, or one of the "bourgeois" party candidates would assure the continued development of strong ties between Finland and the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, and strengthen its general Westward orientation. Relations with the Soviet Union would remain correct, and every effort would be made to maintain the so-called "trusting" relations which apparently exist between the two countries now.

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The election of Prime Minister Kekkonen to the presidency would be likely to have a divisive effect on public opinion and might weaken the high respect and prestige which is traditionally attached to the presidency in Finland. While the president has been traditionally above party, Kekkonen's strong identification with the Agrarians and his controversial position in Finnish political life might involve the presidency in interparty wrangling.

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